MARVEL LEGACY
PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE PART 1
218
THE PUNISHER
ROSENBERG
VILANOVA
LOUGHRIDGE
PARENTAL ADVISORY

MARVEL COMICS
PROUDLY PRESENTS:

FRANK CASTLE WAS A DECORATED MARINE, AN UPSTANDING CITIZEN, AND A FAMILY MAN. THEN HIS FAMILY WAS TAKEN FROM HIM WHEN THEY WERE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED IN A BRUTAL MOB HIT. FROM THAT DAY, HE BECAME A FORCE OF COLD, CALCULATED RETRIBUTION AND VIGILANTISM. FRANK CASTLE DIED WITH HIS FAMILY. NOW, THERE IS ONLY...

THE PUNISHER

FRANK CASTLE IN PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE PART ONE

WRITER... MATTHEW ROSENBERG
ARTIST... GUIU VILANOVA
COLORIST... LEE LOUGHRIDGE
LETTERER... VC'S CORY PETIT

COVER ARTIST
CLAYTON CRAIN

VARIANT COVER ARTIST
GREG SMALLWOOD

LENTICULAR HOMAGE VARIANT COVER ARTIST
TIM BRADSTREET (BASED ON IRON MAN (1968) #282 BY KEVIN HOPGOOD & BOB WIACEK)

SPECIAL THANKS
MITCH MONTGOMERY

DESIGNER
ANTHONY GAMBINO

ASSISTANT EDITOR
KATHLEEN WISNESKI

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
MARK BASSO

EDITOR
JAKE THOMAS

EDITOR IN CHIEF AXEL ALONSO
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER JOE QUESADA
PRESIDENT DAN BUCKLEY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ALAN FINE

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RED HOOK, BROOKLYN.
HERE IS YOUR MONEY. GOOD?
YEAH, IT LOOKS GOOD. YOUR MAN DOOM AIN'T GONNA COME AFTER US FOR TRADING WITH Y'ALL, RIGHT?
HRMPH!
DOOM IS LATVERIAN. WE ARE FROM CHERNAYA.
SAME #$!&, THOUGH, RIGHT?
NO. IT IS NOT. WOULD IT BE THE "SAME #$!&" IF I WERE TO SAY YOU WERE FROM CANADA?
MAN, I'M FROM EAST NEW YORK. AIN'T NOBODY EVER GET THAT MIXED UP WITH CANADA.
NO MATTER, MY CHERNAYAN FRIEND. LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I BROUGHT TO THE PARTY.

ANDRE! BRING OUT THE CRATES.
ANDRE?
IS THERE A PROBLEM?
NAH, HE PROBABLY JUST STEPPED OUT FOR A SMOKE.
TRE, GO GET THE CRATES.
AND FIND OUT WHERE THE $#%! ANDRE WENT.
RELAX, MY FRIEND. WHEN YOU ARE NERVOUS, I AM NERVOUS.
WHAT COULD YOU BE AFRAID OF? I WAS TOLD I WAS DEALING WITH THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN BROOKLYN, NO?
YEAH...
...BUT THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE MORE DANGEROUS.
THEN MAYBE NEXT TIME, I DEAL WITH HIM.

LIKE I TOLD YOU--IF YOU NEED WEAPONS, I'M THE ONLY MAN YOU EVER NEED TO SPEAK TO.
NO SIGN OF ANDRE, BOSS.
WHERE IS THAT STUPID--
#$@#!
CLINK
BANG BANG BANG
BOOM

STAND AND FIGHT, COWARDS!
YOU KIDDIN'?! THAT'S THE PUNISHER!
OPEN THE $#%& DOOR!
HE'S PADLOCKED IT FROM THE OUTSIDE! WE'RE TRAPPED!
C'MON! WE CAN SNEAK PAST HIM WHILE HE DEALS WITH THOSE CHERNAYAN @$%$.
ANYBODY SEE WHERE HE WENT?
NO.
BANG
PING
SKREEEEEECH
AH, #$%@.

SKRUNCH
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE. NOW.
BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG
I THINK IT'S ONLY ONE MAN.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
BOSS! LOOK! ONE OF THE WEAPONS CRATES!
GOOD! GO GET IT!
I GOT IT, B---
SPLORCH

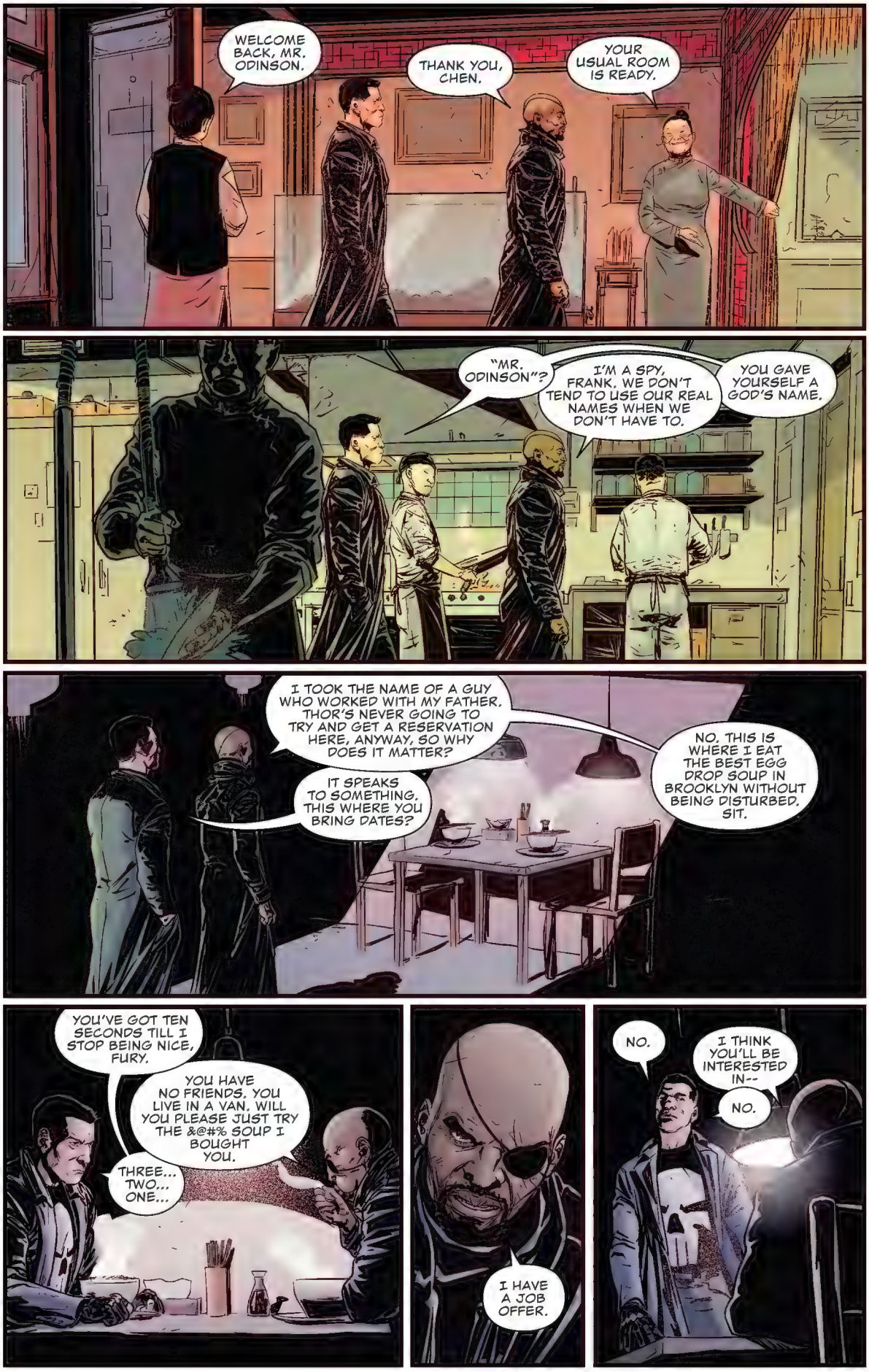
I'M GOING TO KILL THIS PUNISHER MYSELF.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
I THINK I HIT HIM.
GET DOWN, SERGE, YOU IDIOT!
NO. I HIT HIM. NOW I'M GOING TO FINISH HIM!
SO BE IT.
FOLLOW ME, JURAJ, BRING THE REST OF THE GUNS!
WERE GETTING OUT OF HERE.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

GET THE WEAPONS INTO THE BOAT!
WE CAN'T LEAVE YET. WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR--
BLAM BLAM
--SERGE?
THAT'S NOT SERGE! GO! GO!

WHEN WE GET HOME I WILL TELL EVERYONE ABOUT SERGE... YANOSH...ALL OF THEM.
AND THE PUNISHER. WE WILL COME BACK WITH A $%#& ARMY.
WHAT IS--
CLICK!

DRIP
DRIP

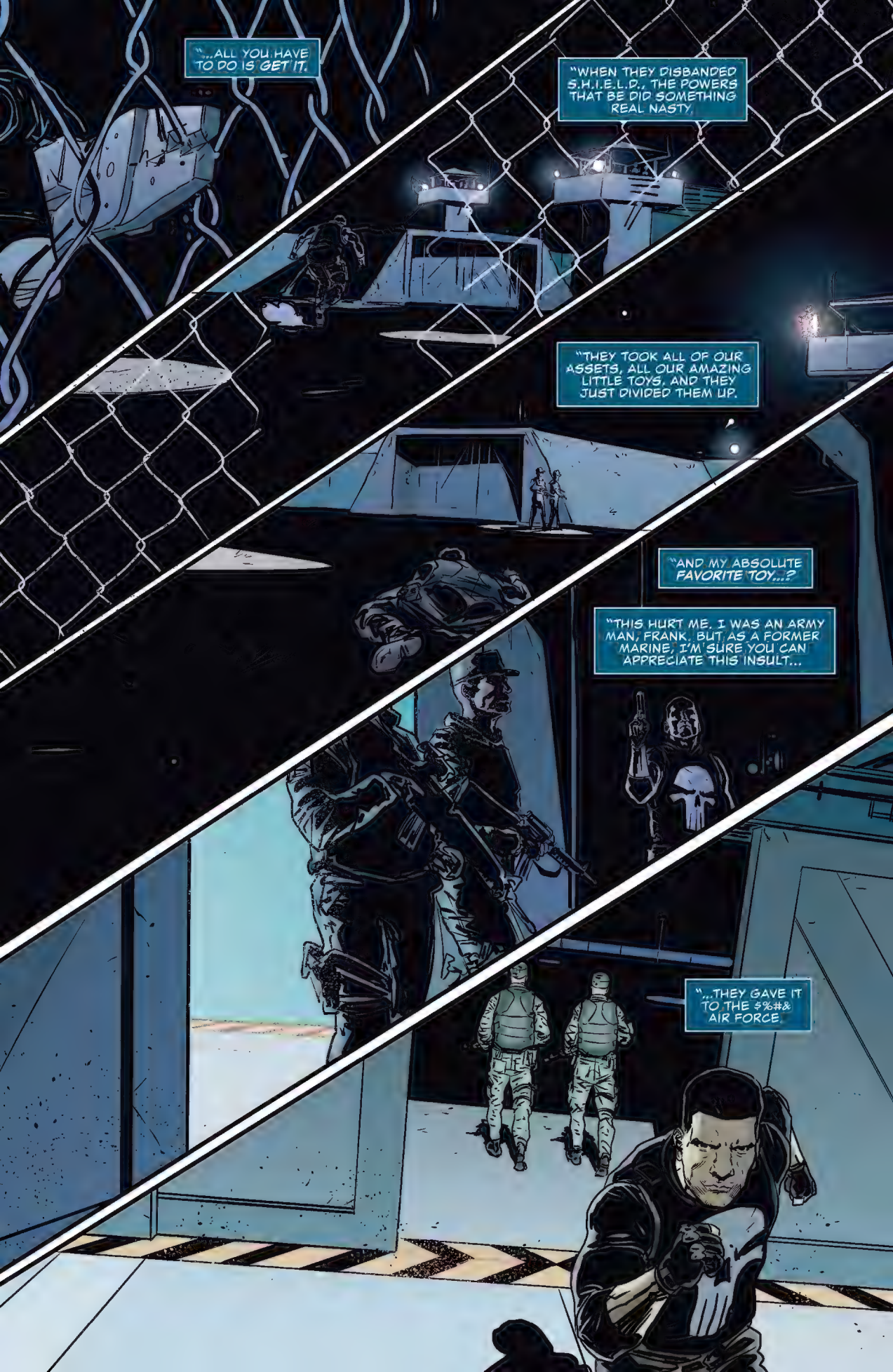
DO YOU LIVE IN HERE, FRANK? WHERE DO YOU GO TO THE BATHROOM?
WHAT DO YOU WANT, FURY?
WE NEED TO TALK.
CLICK
I GOT FILES AND FILES ON YOU, BIG MAN. IF YOU WERE GONNA USE THAT THING ON ME, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE IT LONG BEFORE I IMPLIED THAT YOU WERE JUST ANOTHER GUN-LOVING HOMELESS VET.
THAT'S A LOT OF TRUST TO PUT IN A FILE, JUNIOR.
DON'T ASSUME I DIDN'T CONSIDER PUTTING A BULLET BETWEEN YOUR OLD MAN'S EYES MORE THAN ONCE.
IT WOULD BE STRANGE IF YOU HADN'T.
YOU LIKE DIM SUM, FRANK?


WELCOME BACK, MR. ODINSON.
THANK YOU, CHEN.
YOUR USUAL ROOM IS READY.
"MR. ODINSON"?
I'M A SPY, FRANK. WE DON'T TEND TO USE OUR REAL NAMES WHEN WE DON'T HAVE TO.
YOU GAVE YOURSELF A GOD'S NAME.
I TOOK THE NAME OF A GUY WHO WORKED WITH MY FATHER. THOR'S NEVER GOING TO TRY AND GET A RESERVATION HERE, ANYWAY, SO WHY DOES IT MATTER?
IT SPEAKS TO SOMETHING, THIS WHERE YOU BRING DATES?
NO. THIS IS WHERE I EAT THE BEST EGG DROP SOUP IN BROOKLYN WITHOUT BEING DISTURBED. SIT.
YOU'VE GOT TEN SECONDS TILL I STOP BEING NICE, FURY.
YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS. YOU LIVE IN A VAN. WILL YOU PLEASE JUST TRY THE &@#% SOUP I BOUGHT YOU.
THREE... TWO... ONE...
I HAVE A JOB OFFER.
NO.
I THINK YOU'LL BE INTERESTED IN--
NO.

KIDS, FRANK.
YOU STILL CARE ABOUT KIDS, RIGHT? OR AM I STILL TRUSTING THOSE FILES TOO MUCH?
THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CHERNAYA CAN NOW BE CLASSIFIED AS A FAILED STATE.
IN THE LAST 72 HOURS, A MILITARY COUP OUSTED PRESIDENT ZAWADSKI, SEIZED POWER, AND BEGAN TO SETTLE SOME OLD GRUDGES.
SOME OF THOSE "SETTLEMENTS" HAPPEN TO BE LITTLE GIRLS AND BOYS.
THOSE GUYS YOU WENT AFTER TODAY? THAT FREIGHTER YOU PUT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HARBOR? THEY WERE SMUGGLERS WORKING FOR THE CHERNAYAN ARMY.
AND?
AND MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU STOPPED PLAYING WITH THE TAIL AND WENT FOR THE HEAD.
WHY COME TO ME?

I'VE GOT A SITUATION.
AND YOU'RE MY BEST SOLUTION.
MY PREVIOUS OPTION--S.H.I.E.L.D.--HAS BEEN TAKEN OFF THE BOARD.
I'VE GOT NO AUTHORITY, MY AGENTS ON THE GROUND ARE COMPROMISED, AND I CAN'T SO MUCH AS TAKE A #$!& WITHOUT SOME OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ASKING ME WHO APPROVED IT.
YOU'RE RIGHT...
IT IS GOOD SOUP.
THAT'S IT?
I'M LISTENING. BAD THINGS ARE HAPPENING. YOU NEED ME.
FRANK, YOU'RE A PSYCHOPATH WHO LIVES IN A VAN FULL OF GUNS.
I DON'T NEED YOU. BUT I CAN USE YOU.
GENERAL ARMAND PETROV. TRAINED BY THE SOVIETS, ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY.
THIS COUP IS HIS IDEA. SO ARE THE DEAD KIDS.
IF YOU PUT HIM IN THE GROUND, WE BURY THIS WHOLE THING WITH HIM.
BUT HE WON'T GO DOWN EASY. HE'S PARANOID TO THE POINT OF DELUSION AND THE MUSCLE HE'S GOT AT HIS DISPOSAL, WELL...
...THAT'S MY OTHER PROBLEM.

S.H.I.E.L.D. PULLED FROM THE BEST IN THE WORLD. THE ELITE. BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE A BAD APPLE GOT THROUGH.
IT SEEMS OUR STATION IN CHERNAYA WENT ROTTEN AS SOON AS THOSE S.H.I.E.L.D. CHECKS STOPPED COMING. MY BOYS IN CHERNAYA-- THEY'RE PETROV'S BOYS NOW.
SO IT'S NOT ABOUT DEAD KIDS. YOU WANT SOMEONE TO CLEAN UP THE MESS BEFORE ANYONE NOTICES IT HAS YOUR FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER IT. THAT'S THE GAME.
THE GAME'S NEVER JUST ABOUT ONE THING, FRANK.
PETROV? WAR CRIMINAL. THOSE FORMER AGENTS? TRAITORS. I DON'T CARE WHAT REASON YOU NEED TO JUSTIFY STOPPING THEM, I JUST WANT THEM STOPPED.
SO YOU CAN PUT YOUR OWN GUY IN CHARGE.
DON'T PLAY THE RIGHTEOUS CARD WITH ME, FRANK. I'M TRYING TO SAVE THIS WORLD...AND ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS BURN IT TO THE GROUND.
I'M OFFERING YOU A SHOT AT A GENOCIDAL MANIAC WITH AN ARMY.
YOU JUST NEED TO LIGHT THE FUSE.
AND WHAT'S THE BOMB?
OH, I'VE GOT THAT COVERED, FRANK...


"...ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GET IT.
"WHEN THEY DISBANDED S.H.I.E.L.D., THE POWERS THAT BE DID SOMETHING REAL NASTY.
"THEY TOOK ALL OF OUR ASSETS, ALL OUR AMAZING LITTLE TOYS, AND THEY JUST DIVIDED THEM UP.
"AND MY ABSOLUTE FAVORITE TOY...?
"THIS HURT ME. I WAS AN ARMY MAN, FRANK. BUT AS A FORMER MARINE, I'M SURE YOU CAN APPRECIATE THIS INSULT...
"...THEY GAVE IT TO THE $%#& AIR FORCE.

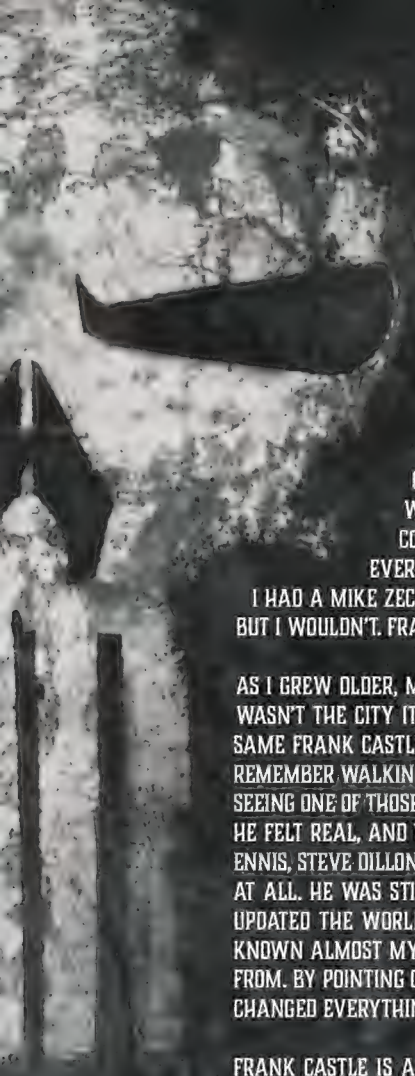
"I KNOW WHERE IT IS, BUT I CAN'T HELP YOU GET IT.
"IF YOU CAN GET IT YOURSELF, LET'S JUST SAY, I THINK YOU CAN LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD WITH ANYTHING PETROV MIGHT THROW AT YOU.
YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
"BUT THERE ARE TWO RULES, FRANK.
STOP!
"FIRST--ABSOLUTELY NO KILLING ON THE SNATCH AND GRAB.

"SECOND-- IF YOU GET SPOTTED...
HOLY... INTRUDER!
"...GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE AS FAST AS YOU CAN.
PROTECT THE DOOR AT ALL--
FURY
EXIT
"I CAN'T RISK YOU GETTING CAUGHT AND TYING ANY OF THIS TO ME.
WHUMP
WHUMP
EXIT
"WE'RE GONNA BE A PRETTY LONG WAY FROM SANCTIONED, LEGAL OR EVEN FORGIVABLE TO MOST OF THE WORLD.

SLAM

WE NEED THE POWER CUT TO ARMORY ROOM C-11 NOW!
ONLY WAY OUT OF THAT ROOM IS THROUGH US, LOCK AND LOAD BOYS.
BOOM
YOU'RE TRAPPED! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY OUT!
YOU NEED TO COME OUT SLOWLY WITH YOUR HANDS UP! RIGHT NOW!
OH, WE'RE SCREWED.

"AND REMEMBER, WHEN THIS MISSION IS OVER...
"...THAT SUIT GOES RIGHT BACK TO ME."
#$%& THAT.
TO BE CONTINUED!



FRANK ANSWERS

I GREW UP IN NEW YORK CITY. NOT THE SCARY NEW YORK CITY WE KNOW FROM ***THE WARRIORS***, ***DEATH WISH*** OR ***TAXI DRIVER***. THAT WAS THE NEW YORK THAT BIRTHED FRANK CASTLE. I GREW UP IN THE NEW YORK THAT CAME AFTER THAT. MY NEW YORK WAS STILL FULL OF GUNS, DRUGS AND VIOLENCE, BUT IT WAS ALSO A PLACE WHERE PARENTS DIDN'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID TO LET A NERDY LITTLE %$@# LIKE ME GO TO THE COMIC SHOP BY MYSELF EVERY WEEK. AND THAT'S WHAT I DID, EVERY WEEK. AND THAT'S WHERE I MET FRANK.

TO ME, FRANK CASTLE WAS A PART OF MY CITY – THE PART THAT WAS ONLY TALKED ABOUT IN HUSHED VOICES AROUND US NOSY KIDS. HE WAS THE THING THEY NEVER SAID ON THE 11 O'CLOCK NEWS. HE WAS WHAT MADE THE POLICE SIRENS WAIL ALL NIGHT. HE WAS THE UNDERBELLY THAT NEW YORK WAS TRYING SO DESPERATELY TO GET RID OF BUT COULDN'T QUITE SHAKE. AND I NEEDED TO KNOW MORE. I BOUGHT EVERY ISSUE. I BOUGHT EVERY TRADE PAPERBACK. I SAVED UP FOR HALF A YEAR TO GET **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129**. I HAD A MIKE ZECK PUNISHER POSTER ON MY BEDROOM DOOR THAT MY MOM BEGGED ME TO TAKE DOWN. BUT I WOULDN'T. FRANK WAS MY HERO.

AS I GREW OLDER, MY LOVE FOR THE PUNISHER WANED. I WASN'T THE SAME KID I USED TO BE. NEW YORK WASN'T THE CITY IT USED TO BE. COMICS WEREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE. BUT FRANK CASTLE WAS THE SAME FRANK CASTLE HE'D ALWAYS BEEN. HE HADN'T CHANGED WITH THE TIMES AND I STOPPED CARING. I REMEMBER WALKING INTO THE COMIC SHOP ONE DAY, YEARS AFTER I STOPPED READING **THE PUNISHER**, AND SEEING ONE OF THOSE TIM BRADSTREET COVERS, THOUGH. I JUST STARED AT IT. HIS PUNISHER WAS UNNERVING. HE FELT REAL, AND THAT WAS SCARY. I BOUGHT THE BOOK AND READ IT ON MY WAY HOME. INSIDE, GARTH ENNIS, STEVE DILLON AND CHRIS SOTOMAYOR DID SOMETHING BRILLIANT. THEY DIDN'T CHANGE THE PUNISHER AT ALL. HE WAS STILL THE SINGLE-MINDED, OBSESSIVE, DISTURBED MAN HE ALWAYS WAS. BUT THEY HAD UPDATED THE WORLD AROUND HIM. AND THAT WAS IT. THEY RECONTEXTUALIZED THIS CHARACTER I HAD KNOWN ALMOST MY WHOLE LIFE, THIS CHARACTER I HAD GROWN UP WITH, IDOLIZED AND THEN MOVED ON FROM. BY POINTING OUT THE ONE TRUTH ABOUT FRANK CASTLE THAT MATTERS – HE NEVER CHANGES – THEY CHANGED EVERYTHING. MY CHILDHOOD HERO TERRIFIED ME, AND I WAS OBSESSED ONCE AGAIN.

FRANK CASTLE IS A SIMPLE ANSWER TO VERY COMPLEX QUESTIONS. TO SOME HE IS A BRAVE MAN WHO SAVES LIVES AND STOPS BAD GUYS. TO OTHERS HE IS A REVENGE FANTASY TAKEN TO ITS MOST DANGEROUS CONCLUSION. SOME PEOPLE SEE HIM AS A SUPER HERO AND OTHERS A VILLAIN. HE KEEPS PEOPLE SAFE WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILS OR HE BREAKS THE LAW AS HE SEES FIT. BUT THAT'S THE THING, IT'S ALL CONTEXT. BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY FRANK ISN'T ANY OF THAT. HE IS JUST A MAN WITH A GUN WHO KILLS PEOPLE HE THINKS DESERVE IT.

AND IN MANY WAYS THAT'S WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT. PEOPLE TRYING TO GET SIMPLE ANSWERS TO COMPLEX QUESTIONS AND ALL THE WAYS THAT WORKS AND ALL THE WAYS IT DOESN'T. WE'RE RECONTEXTUALIZING FRANK CASTLE HERE. WE'RE GIVING HIM A LARGER STAGE, BIGGER GUNS, MORE AMBITIOUS TARGETS. WE GAVE HIM THE WAR MACHINE ARMOR, BUT HE'S NOT BECOMING WAR MACHINE. HE COULD NEVER. WAR MACHINE IS JAMES RHODES, A HERO, AN AVENGER, SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO. FRANK IS SIMPLY THE PUNISHER, NOTHING MORE AND NOTHING LESS. THESE CHARACTERS WE ALL LOVE AREN'T THEIR SUITS AND THEIR WEAPONS, THEY ARE THE PEOPLE INSIDE THAT WE CARE ABOUT. HOPEFULLY, BY HAVING FRANK STEAL THE ICONIC ARMOR, WE CAN SHINE A LIGHT ON NOT JUST FRANK'S LEGACY, BUT RHODEY'S AS WELL.

OUR STORY IS ALSO ABOUT NATIONALISM, WAR, LESSER EVILS, MORAL RELATIVISM AND LEGACIES. WHILE I WRITE THIS I AM FOCUSED NOT ONLY ON THE LEGACIES OF THESE CHARACTERS, BUT ALSO THE LEGACY OF CREATORS SUCH AS GERRY CONWAY, JOHN ROMITA SR. AND ROSS ANDRU THAT I HOPE WE HONOR. AND THE LEGACIES OF ALL THE AMAZING CREATORS WHO CAME AFTER AND HAVE INSPIRED ME FOR ALL THESE YEARS: STEVEN GRANT, MIKE ZECK, JO DUFFY, KLAUS JANSON, ALAN GRANT, CARL POTTS, JORGE ZAFFINO, JOHN OSTRANDER, DARICK ROBERTSON, JIM LEE, LARRY HAMA, JOHN BUSCEMA, MATT FRACTION, ARIEL OLIVETTI, TONY MOORE, RICK REMENDER, JASON AARON, BECKY CLOONAN, GARTH ENNIS AND, OF COURSE, STEVE DILLON. AND THE TONS MORE WHO I WILL REMEMBER TOMORROW AND KICK MYSELF FOR NOT INCLUDING.

I HOPE WE CAN DO RIGHT BY ALL OF THEM AND I HOPE WE CAN DO RIGHT BY ALL OF YOU. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING WHERE FRANK GOES AND HOW THE WORLD DEALS WITH THAT, AND I HOPE YOU'LL COME WITH US.

MATTHEW ROSENBERG
NEW YORK CITY

NEXT

SEND LETTERS TO **MHEROES@MARVEL.COM**, BE SURE TO MARK THEM **"OKAY TO PRINT."**

FRANK CASTLE.
DECORATED VETERAN.
LOVING HUSBAND AND FATHER.
WHEN THE CASTLE FAMILY STUMBLED UPON A GANGLAND EXECUTION IN CENTRAL PARK, THIS PERFECT LIFE...
...WAS DESTROYED.
THE GUILTY PARTY CLEANED UP ALL THE WITNESSES, KILLING CASTLE'S FAMILY.
FRANK SURVIVED THE ASSAULT...
...BUT LOST EVERYTHING--INCLUDING HIMSELF.
AND WHEN CORRUPT POLICE FAILED TO BRING HIS FAMILY'S MURDERERS TO JUSTICE...

...HE TOOK MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.
CHANNELING HIS ELITE-LEVEL MILITARY TRAINING THROUGH HIS BURNING DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE, FRANK FOUND HIS NEW VOCATION.
VIGILANTE.
HIS UNRELENTING PURSUIT OF HIS OWN BRAND OF JUSTICE HAS PUT HIM AT ODDS WITH THOSE WHO SEEK LAW AND ORDER...
...AND THOSE WHO DO NOT SEE THE WORLD IN BLACK AND WHITE THE WAY HE DOES.
HE MANAGES TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE LAW, NEVER LETTING ANY CRIMINAL OFF EASY...

...BECAUSE FRANK WILL DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT ANOTHER FAMILY FROM ENDURING WHAT HE WENT THROUGH. THE INNOCENT WILL BE PROTECTED.
THE GUILTY PUNISHED.
FRANK CASTLE DIED WITH HIS FAMILY. NOW, THERE IS ONLY...
THE PUNISHER

ROBBIE THOMPSON
WRITER

MATT HORAK
ARTIST

CHRIS O'HALLORAN
COLOR ARTIST

VC'S CORY PETIT
LETTERER

KATHLEEN WISNESKI
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DARREN SHAN
EDITOR